

Message Text

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12

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R 180630Z MAY 75

FM AMEMBASSY JIDDA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1247

INFO AMEMBASSY DACCA

AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD

AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

C O N F I D E N T I A L JIDDA 3477

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, SA, BG

SUBJECT: SAUDI ARABIAN RELATIONS WITH BANGLADESH

REF: DACCA 2337 (NOTAL)

SUMMARY:

A FOREIGN MINISTRY OFFICIAL INFORMS US THAT THE BAGLA-
DESH FOREIGN MINISTER WAS WELL RECEIVED ON HIS VISIT TO
SAUD ARABIA BUT THAT NO DECISION HAS BEEN TAKEN IN RE-
GARD TO RECOGNITION AND NO DECISION IS LIKELY BEFORE THE
ISLAMIC FOREIGN MINISTERS MEETING IN MID-JULY. END
SUMMARY.

1. WE DISCUSSED THE RECENT VISIT OF BANGLADESH FOREIGN
MINISTER KAMAL HOSSEIN WITH THE DIRECTOR OF AFTICAN/ASIAN
AFFAIRS AT THE FOREIGN MINISTRY, AHMED SIRAJ. HOSSEIN
WAS WELL AND CORDIALLY RECEIVED (HE HAD AN AUDIENCE WITH
THE KING) BUT NO DECISION HAS BEEN MADE ON THE QUESTION
OF RECOGNITION NOR IS A DECISION IN THAT REGARD IMMINENT.
SIRAJ IMPLIED THAT THE REASON PREVIOUSLY GIVEN FOR WITH-
HOLDING RECOGNITION I.E. THAT VIRTUALLY 100 PERCENT MUSLIM BANG-
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LADESH WAS CONSTITUTIONALLY A SECULAR STATE, WAS NO LONGER

A MAJOR CONSIDERATION. HE SAID THAT THE PRIMARY SAUDI CONCERN HAD BEEN WHETHER BANGLADESH WAS WILLING TO REGULARIZE ITS RELATIONS WITH PAKISTAN. THE SAG WAS NOT YET COMPLETELY SATISFIED ON THIS POINT AND WOULD BE CONSIDERING THE MATTER FURTHER.

2. SIRAJ SAID THAT THERE WERE ALSO PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS OF A LESSER ORDER OF MAGNITUDE BEARING ON THE SAUDI UNWILLINGNESS TO MAKE A DECISION AT THIS TIME. THESE INCLUDED RELUCTANCE TO ABSORB A (PROBABLY LARGE) BANGLADESH DIPLOMATIC ESTABLISHMENT IN JIDDA AT THIS TIME, PARTICULARLY AS THE ESTABLISHMENT OF REPRESENTATION WOULD MOST LIKELY LEAD TO A SIZEABLE INCREASE IN THE NUMBER OF PILGRIMS FROM BANGLADESH DURING THE FORTHCOMING HAJJ SEASON. LAST YEAR'S HAJJ SET A RECORD FOR NUMBER OF PILGRIMS FROM OVERSEAS. DESPITE NEAR FRANTIC CONSTRUCTION AND OTHER PREPARATIONS THE SAUDIS ARE CONCERNED ABOUT BEING ABLE TO HANDLE THIS YEAR'S INFLUX. PILGRIM FACILITIES WERE BADLY STRAINED LAST YEAR; A CHOLERA OUTBREAK WAS CONTAINED THROUGH VIGOROUS MEASURES BUT, STILL, UP TO A THOUSAND PERSONS MAY HAVE DIED.)

3. SIRAJ SAID THAT THE QUESTION OF REPRESENTATION WAS UNLIKELY TO BE SETTLED BEFORE THE ISLAMIC FOREIGN MINISTER'S MEETING IN JIDDA IN MID-JULY. HE WAS UNAWARE WHETHER A DECISION HAD BEEN MADE TO INVITE BANGLADESH TO THAT MEETING.

4. SUBSEQUENT TO HOSSEIN'S VISIT TO SAUDI ARABIA THE SAUDI MINISTRY OF FINANCE RECEIVED A TELEGRAM FROM THE BANGLADESH MINISTER OF FINANCE PROPOSING THAT HE COME TO SAUDI ARABIA FOR A VISIT. THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE HAS QUERIED THE FOREIGN MINISTRY AS TO WHETHER THERE IS ANY REASON WHY THE BANGLADESH FINANCE MINISTER SHOULD COME AT THIS TIME. THE FOREIGN MINISTRY REPLIED THAT THEY KNEW OF NONE. IF HE DOES COME, THE SAUDIS WILL BE TYPICALLY GRACIOUS BUT PROBABLY VERY RELUCTANT HOSTS.

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